

REMARKS

Applicants appreciate the consideration of the present application afforded by the Examiner. Claims 1, 3-7, 9-13 and 15-18 were pending prior to the Office Action. Claims 1, 7, and 13 have been canceled through this Reply. Therefore, claims 3-6, 9-12, and 15-18 are pending. Favorable reconsideration and allowance of the present application are respectfully requested in view of the following remarks.

Allowable Subject Matter

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 7, and 13 under U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,805,213 to Spaulding et al. ("Spaulding") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,489,996 to Oku et al. ("Oku"). The Examiner further indicated claims 3-6, 9-12, and 15-18 as being allowable.

In the interest of expedited prosecution, Applicants have cancelled the rejected claims, leaving only the allowed claims pending. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the pending claims are in condition for allowance. Notice of same is earnestly solicited.

The cancellation of the rejected claims should not be construed as acquiescence by Applicants to the arguments presented by the Examiner in the Office Action, and Applicants reserve the right to pursue the limitations of the cancelled claims in any potential continuing application based upon the present application.

CONCLUSION

All rejections raised in the Office Action having been addressed, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance. Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact John R. Sanders (Reg. No. 60,166), to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

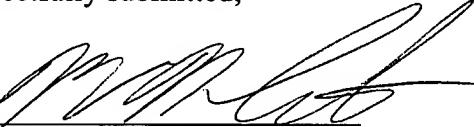
If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

MR

By


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